



Boost to Defence Exports

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Why in News

The Union Cabinet has recently approved export of the **Akash surface-to-air missile to “friendly countries”** and constituted a **committee, headed by the Defence Minister**, for faster approval of export of defence platforms.

This committee would **authorise subsequent export of major indigenous platforms** to various countries.

Key Points

- The export version of Akash, will be **different from the system currently deployed with the Indian armed forces.**
- The Cabinet approval will facilitate Indian manufactures to participate in **RFI/RFP issued by various countries.**
 - A **request for information (RFI)** is used when the owner wants several contractors to provide potential solutions, while a **request for proposal (RFP)** is used in a **bidding process to solicit offers for a project.**
- So far, Indian defence exports included parts/components etc. The export of big platforms was minimal.
 - This initiative of the Cabinet would help the country **improve its defence products and make them globally competitive.**
 - It would be a significant step under **Atma Nirbhar Bharat**,
- Besides Akash, there is interest in other major platforms like the **coastal surveillance system, radars and air platforms.**

Akash Missile

- Akash is India's **first indigenously produced medium range Surface to Air missile** that can engage multiple targets from multiple directions.
 - The all-weather missile can engage targets at a speed **2.5 times more than the speed of sound** and can detect and destroy targets flying at **low, medium and high altitudes**.
- The Akash missile system has been designed and developed as part of India's 30-year-old **integrated guided-missile development programme (IGMDP)** which also includes other missiles like **Nag, Agni, Trishul and Prithvi**.
- **Range and Capability:**
 - The **nuclear-capable missile** can fly at a speed of up to **Mach 2.5** (nearly 860 meter per second) at a maximum height of **18 km**.
 - It can strike enemy aerial targets like fighter jets, drones, cruise missiles, air-to-surface missiles as well as ballistic missiles from a distance of **30 km**.
- **Unique features of Akash:**
 - The missile is unique in the way that it can be launched from **mobile platforms like battle tanks or wheeled trucks**. It has nearly 90% kill probability.
 - The missile is supported by the **indigenously developed radar** called '**Rajendra**' that can handle **highly-maneuvring multiple targets from multiple directions in group or autonomous mode**.
 - The missile is reportedly cheaper and more accurate than US' Patriot missiles due to its solid-fuel technology and high-tech radars.
- **Manufactured by:**
 - The missile system is designed and developed by **Defence Research and Development Organisation** (DRDO)

India's Defence Exports

- As per the data published by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute**, or SIPRI, in March 2020, India is **ranked 23rd in the list of major arms exporters** for 2015-2019 and 19th for 2019.
 - The **Ministry of Defence's annual report 2018-19** records that the defence exports were worth Rs **10,745 crore**, a growth of more than 100% from 2017-18 (Rs 4,682 crore) and over 700 % since 2016-17 (Rs 1,521 crore).
 - It's share of global arms exports is only **0.17%**.
- The current government has been laying emphasis on defence manufacturing in India to build up the country's manufacturing base, ensure jobs for its youth and to bring down India's arms import bill.
 - India's target was to export **5 billion USD** worth of military hardware by 2025

Way Forward

There is a need to create an environment for **greater participation of private industry**, a stable macro-economic and political environment, and a transparent business environment which encourages **fair competition**.

Source:IE